

Higher Education Gender Report moves in right direction, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has welcomed recommendations in the 'Gender Action Plan 2018 - 2020' published today (Monday November 12th, 2018) and launched by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, and Minister for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell-O'Connor.

IFUT General Secretary, Joan Donegan, said the announcement of 45 new senior academic posts for women in Higher Education colleges over the the next three years is "a necessary step to address the persistent lack of promotion of women to senior posts in our universities."

"Over half of academics are women but less than a quarter of University Professors are women. This is despite the existence of detailed equality legislation, a strong combination of encouragement, pressure through the Athena Swan Charter, and regular highlighting of the issue in the media."

Joan Donegan said that the decision to announce additional female posts is a pioneering and brave move by the Minister for Higher Education. "Given the reputational damage to universities from some recent cases, and the trauma inflicted on women who have had to respond to legal challenges on this issue, it would be disappointing if this initiative is not widely and warmly acknowledged and accepted."

"The proposal should be seen as a gender equality, not a specifically women's, issue. Indeed there are cases of discrimination against men also on IFUT's books," she said.

There is increasing evidence internationally that measures such as this are required to break the logjam of both conscious and unconscious discrimination against women, Joan Donegan said. "We have seen the introduction this year of obligatory equal pay legislation in Iceland and here at home through the introduction of gender quotas for general election candidates."

This legislation should be accompanied by a new approach of seeking to resolve gender and age discrimination issues through discourse and normal industrial relations channels, to avoid the need for highly costly legal cases, which is a waste of tax payers' money and student fees at university level" Joan Donegan said.

ENDS

For further information on this media release please contact:

John Gallagher - John Gallagher Consulting. Tel. 087 9369888

Joan Donegan - General Secretary, IFUT - Tel. 087 1315960